

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /056 W

----- 060630

R 261744Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8666

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, UK, EC

SUBJECT: EC REFERENDUM WHITE PAPER PUBLISHED

1. WILSON GOVERNMENT PUBLISHED WHITE PAPER SPELLING OUT DETAILS OF PROPOSED EC REFERENDUM FEBRUARY 26. COMPLETE TEXT FOLLOWS BY POUCH. MAJOR POINTS INCLUDE:

-- REFERENDUM WILL BE HELD BEFORE END OF JUNE;

-- SIMPLE MAJORITY, "WITHOUT QUALIFICATIONS OR CONDITIONS OF ANY KIND," WILL DETERMINE OUTCOME WHICH WILL BE BINDING ON GOVERNMENT;

-- VOTES WILL BE COUNTED CENTRALLY, PRODUCING SINGLE NATIONAL TALLY (GOVERNMENT ESTIMATES COUNT WILL

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TAKE FIVE DAYS);

-- GOVERNMENT SUGGESTS, BUT IS NOT COMMITTED TO,
FOLLOWING PHRASING OF REFERENDUM QUESTION: "THE GOVERN-
MENT HAVE ANNOUNCED RESULTS OF RENEGOTIATION OF UK'S
TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP IN EC. DO YOU THINK UK SHOULD STAY
IN EC?;

-- MASSIVE GOVERNMENT PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN WOULD
BE "INAPPROPRIATE," BUT GOVERNMENT WILL MAIL POPULAR
EXPLANATION OF RENEGOTIATION RESULTS TO EACH REGISTERED
VOTER, ALONG WITH SINGLE DOCUMENT CONTAINING PRO AND
CON STATEMENTS FROM EACH CAMP;

-- GOVERNMENT WILL ALSO CONSIDER LIMITED CASH
GRANTS FOR EACH SIDE, AND WILL PERMIT BROADCAST AUTHORI-
TIES TO RUN SERIES OF PROGRAMS, SUBJECT TO CONSTRAINTS
WHICH APPLY TO NORMAL ELECTION; AND

-- FORMAT OF BALLOT PAPER WILL BE DETERMINED AFTER
CONSULTATION WITH POLITICAL PARTIES AND CONCERNED ORGANI-
ZATIONS.

2. COMMENT: CHANCELLOR DENIS HEALEY TOLD POLITICAL
COUNSELLOR FEB. 25 THAT CABINET WAS SPLIT ON SINGLE
NATIONAL TALLY QUESTION AND THAT HE LED FIGHT AGAINST
THOSE FAVORING REGIONAL OR CONSTITUENCY COUNTS. THIS
WILL BE MOST CONTENTIOUS POINT WHEN WHITE PAPER IS DE-
BATED IN COMMONS AFTERNOON OF FEB. 26, AS ANTI-MARKETEERS
AND NATIONALIST PARTIES STRONGLY FAVOR CONSTITUENCY OR
REGIONAL TALLY. WE ALSO ANTICIPATE TORIES WILL TAKE
ISSUE WITH REFERENDUM ITSELF AND WITH GOVERNMENT DECISION
TO BE BOUND BY UNQUALIFIED, SIMPLE MAJORITY, AS THEY
FEAR TURNOUT MAY BE SO SMALL AS TO BE INCONCLUSIVE INDICA-
TION OF WILL OF BRITISH PEOPLE. THERE IS OUTSIDE
CHANCE THAT THESE FORCES CAN COALESCE TO BLOCK OR DELAY
PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION OR TO IMPOSE SIGNIFICANT AMEND-
MENTS TO GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEMBERSHIP, PUBLICATIONS, SPECIAL ELECTIONS, RELATIONS WITH REGIONAL ORGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LONDON02943
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750068-0783
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750211/aaaaajts.tel
Line Count: 96
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 APR 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <17 APR 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EC REFERENDUM WHITE PAPER PUBLISHED
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, UK, EC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006